

## REMARKS

In accordance with the foregoing, claims 1, 3, 5, 9-11, 13-16, 18, 20 and 21 have been amended. Claims 1-21 are pending and under consideration.

As a preliminary matter, an interview was conducted between the Examiner and the Applicant's representative. The Examiner is thanked for her time. In the interview, the Examiner suggested amending the claims to further clarify the relationship between claimed front and rear parts. The independent claims have been amended herein in accordance with the Examiner's suggestion.

The claim objections and rejections under 35 U.S.C. § 112 are overcome by the present amendments.

The rejections based on 35 U.S.C. § 102 are overcome by the present amendments. As discussed during the interview, Cunliffe and Young teach an elastic portion in the rear and a non-stretchable portion in the front. In contrast, claim 1 (as an example) recites that the front part is stretchable and the rear part is non-stretchable.

Regarding Kronenberger, as discussed in the interview, the bands 38 and 58 of this reference overlap in the radial direction (Fig. 8). In contrast claim 1 (as an example) recites respective ends of the front and rear parts abutting each other.

Accordingly, withdrawal of the rejections is requested.

There being no further outstanding objections or rejections, it is submitted that the application is in condition for allowance. An early action to that effect is courteously solicited.

Finally, if there are any formal matters remaining after this response, the Examiner is requested to telephone the undersigned to attend to these matters.

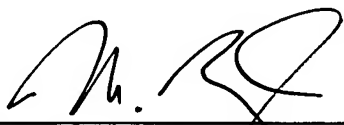
Serial No. 10/647,125

If there are any additional fees associated with filing of this Amendment, please charge the same to our Deposit Account No. 19-3935.

Respectfully submitted,

STAAS & HALSEY LLP

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By:   
Michael J. Badagliacca  
Registration No. 39,099

1201 New York Avenue, NW, Suite 700  
Washington, D.C. 20005  
Telephone: (202) 434-1500  
Facsimile: (202) 434-1501